FIRE AND ICE

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FIRE AND ICE

Chapter IV: The Ballad of Death & Life

THE STORY SO FAR

IN HER LAST GREAT ACT OF SORCERY, USING HER FADING POWERS, EVEN AS THEY'RE IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSFERRING TO PRINCE NEKRON, JULIANNA, MADDENED WITH GRIEF, HAS RESURRECTED HER FIRSTBORN SON KALEDAN FROM THE DEAD.

AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME DARAH, QUEEN OF FIREKEEP, RAN INTO A RAIDING PARTY OF THE NORTH'S SUBHUMAN SAVAGES, WITH THEIR PET WOLF MONSTERS. THE WARRIOR BOY LARN SHOWED UP IN THE NICK OF TIME TO LEND HER A HAND. TOGETHER, ALONG WITH DARAH'S WHITE PANTHER FOREST GHOST, THEY WERE ABLE TO OVERCOME THE RAIDERS.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO
SARA FRAZETTA & JOE WEBER

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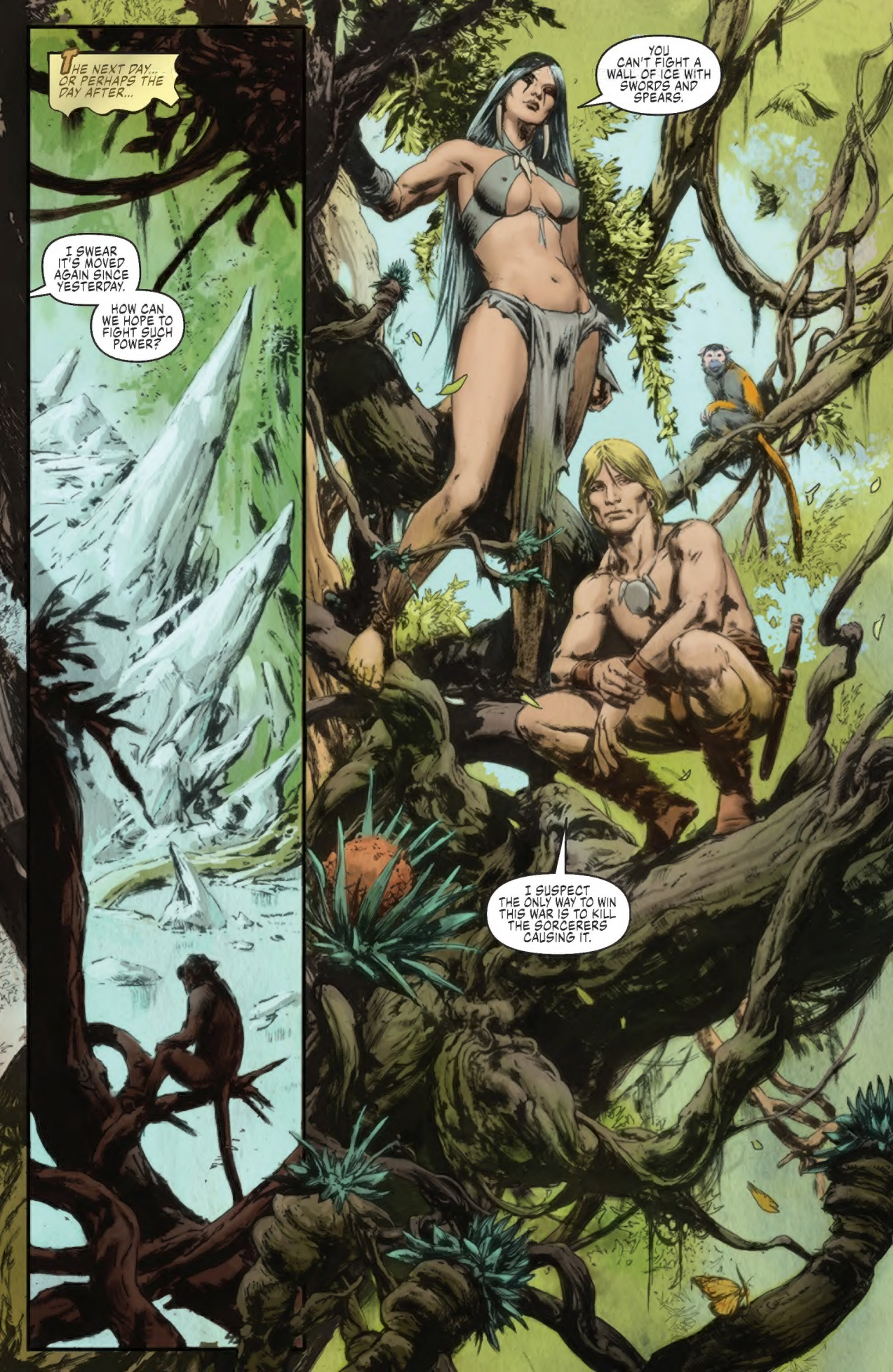
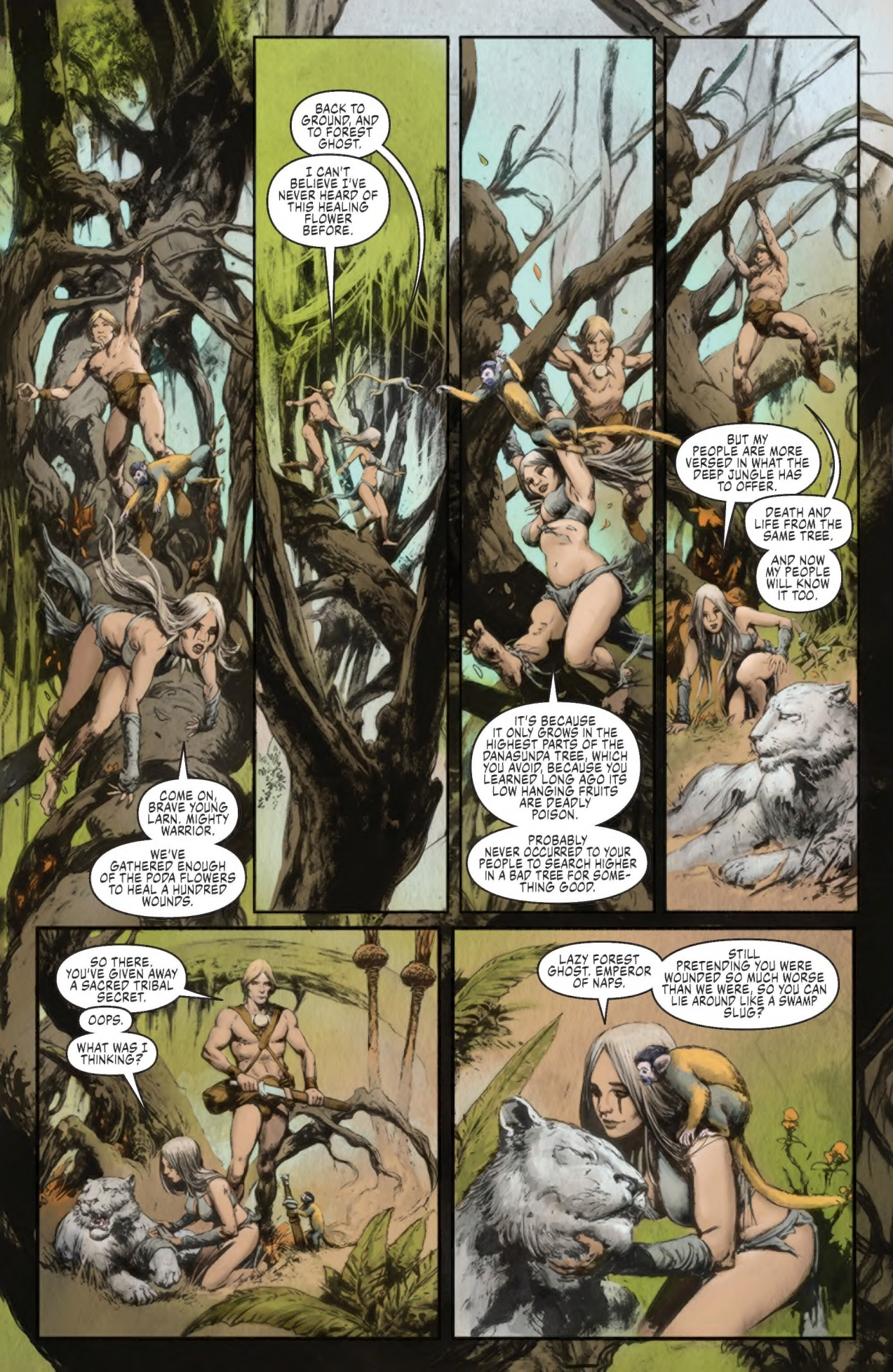
IN THE VERY NEXT MOMENT...
MOTHER, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
DID YOU MISS ME SO MUCH YOU HAD TO CALL ME BACK FROM BETTER FIELDS?
KILL IT, MOTHER!
KILL IT NOW!
THIS THING ISN'T YOUR SON!
THE BALLAD OF DEATH AND LIFE
BILL WILLINGHAM
LEONARDO MANCO
JEFF ECKLEBERRY
MATT IDELSON
SPECIAL THANKS TO SARA FRAZETTA AND JOE WEBER

QUIET, BROTHER!
I'LL DEAL WITH YOU IN A MOMENT.
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH OUR BELOVED MOTHER?
MY DEAR SON, KALEDAN, FOREVER FIRST IN MY HEART.
DID YOU IMAGINE I'D ALLOW YOU TO ROT IN A GRAVE, WHEN I HAD THE POWER TO BRING YOU BACK TO LIFE?
KALEDAN?
THERE'S NO ONE HERE BY THAT NAME.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, THE NAME DIES WITH THE BODY?
CALL ME KADAV'R.
FITS ME BETTER, DON'T YOU AGREE?
YANKING ME BACK FROM THE REALM OF DEATH WAS A FOOLISH VIOLATION OF THE ESTABLISHED PATH.
YOU SHOULD KNOW YOU'VE MADE ENEMIES IN THE REALMS BEYOND THE VEIL OF LIFE, MOTHER.
BETTER HOPE YOU LIVE TO A RIPE OLD AGE IN THIS LIFE, BECAUSE YOU WON'T ENJOY WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
NOW, COMMAND ME.
NAME YOUR TASK, SO THAT I MAY DO IT AND THEN BE DONE WITH THIS WORLD.
YOUR JOB WILL BE SIMPLE ENOUGH.
KILL ALL THAT YOU SEE, OUTSIDE OF THE ICE KINGDOM, INCLUDING THE ONE WHO KILLED YOU, IF YOU GET THE CHANCE.

AND ESPECIALLY HUNT THE KING AND QUEEN OF FIRE KEEP.
HARM NO ONE HERE.
YOUR COMMANDS CONTRADICT, MOTHER.
SHALL I KILL NEKRON FOR KILLING ME, OR LEAVE HIM UNHARMED?
CHOOSE!
WHAT IN ALL THE COUNTLESS HELLS ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
AN ASSASSIN FROM FIREKEEP KILLED YOU-- N-NOT YOUR OWN BROTHER!


THE NEXT DAY... OR PERHAPS THE DAY AFTER...
I SWEAR IT'S MOVED AGAIN SINCE YESTERDAY.
HOW CAN WE HOPE TO FIGHT SUCH POWER?
YOU CAN'T FIGHT A WALL OF ICE WITH SWORDS AND SPEARS.
I SUSPECT THE ONLY WAY TO WIN THIS WAR IS TO KILL THE SORCERERS CAUSING IT.


COME ON, BRAVE YOUNG LARN. MIGHTY WARRIOR.
WE'VE GATHERED ENOUGH OF THE PODA FLOWERS TO HEAL A HUNDRED WOUNDS.
BACK TO GROUND, AND TO FOREST GHOST.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THIS HEALING FLOWER BEFORE.
IT'S BECAUSE IT ONLY GROWS IN THE HIGHEST PARTS OF THE DANASUNDA TREE, WHICH YOU AVOID, BECAUSE YOU LEARNED LONG AGO ITS LOW HANGING FRUITS ARE DEADLY POISON.
PROBABLY NEVER OCCURRED TO YOUR PEOPLE TO SEARCH HIGHER IN A BAD TREE FOR SOMETHING GOOD.
BUT MY PEOPLE ARE MORE VERSED IN WHAT THE DEEP JUNGLE HAS TO OFFER.
DEATH AND LIFE FROM THE SAME TREE.
AND NOW MY PEOPLE WILL KNOW IT TOO.
SO THERE. YOU'VE GIVEN AWAY A SACRED TRIBAL SECRET.
OOPS.
WHAT WAS I THINKING?
LAZY FOREST GHOST. EMPEROR OF NAPS.
STILL PRETENDING YOU WERE WOUNDED SO MUCH WORSE THAN WE WERE, SO YOU CAN LIE AROUND LIKE A SWAMP SLUG?

HEY.
I'M BACK WITH THE REMEDY TO TAKE ALL OF YOUR EXCUSES AWAY.
WHAT IF WE START WITH YOUR FRONT END AND MOVE OUR WAY BACK, HMM?
REMIND ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MY DAUGHTER, WHEN WE GET BACK TO FIREKEEP.
YOU'RE ABOUT THE SAME AGE. MAYBE YOU'LL LIKE EACH OTHER.
WE'LL HAVE TO CLAIM YOU'RE A PRINCE OF YOUR PEOPLE, SO MY HUSBAND WILL THINK IT A POLITICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS MATCH.
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
IN THE MEANTIME, GIVE ME A HAND HERE, AND LEARN HOW TO DO THIS.
WE'LL NEED TO MAKE A PASTE OF THE PETALS, BUT NOT THE PISTILS.
THAT'S VITAL TO REMEMBER.
:SHUSH!:
I HEARD SOMETHING.

DA KALUFA GA!
CERN! KALU FRATAN KAI!
DA KORA! NUC TUP MAFT JO IKA SPODA!
YAG GA UDAG PENA TUPA!

KALU OPU KE, KE, KE!
=UUURRK?=
OP DAFA!
IKUN DAFA OPU ALFO!

LATER...
WAKE UP, YOU FOOLISH BOY!
WAKE UP AND FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT YOU DID.
MOTHER?
I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD FOR CERTAIN.
WHAT HAPPENED?
YOUR BROTHER ALMOST KILLED YOU, AND I ALMOST LET HIM.
LUCKY FOR YOU HE ISN'T FULLY ALIVE ANYMORE, AND WILL BE DEAD AND ROTTING AGAIN, ONCE MY SPELL PETERS OUT.
YOU'RE THE ONLY SON I HAVE LEFT.
SEEMS WE'RE STUCK WITH EACH OTHER.
WHERE IS HE NOW?
OUT KILLING.

"JUST AS I COMMANDED.

"GO OUT AMONG OUR ENEMIES, AND KILL ALL THAT YOU SEE, IN THEIR THOUSANDS AND THEIR TENS OF THOUSANDS.

"KILL WARRIORS AND KINGS, AND THE INNOCENT AS WELL.
"SPARE NO ONE, MAN, WOMAN, OR CHILD, UNTIL THEIR WILL TO DEFY ME HAS PERISHED.
"UNTIL THEIR KINGS AND CHIEFTAINS AND SATRAPS AND TRIBAL LEADERS ALL PRESENT THEMSELVES BEFORE ME ON BENDED KNEE, BEGGING FOR MERCY."
HOLD ON!
HOLD FAST, DAMN YOU!
"UNTIL THEY BEG ME FOR THE CHANCE TO SERVE, AND COWER AND SLAVE, UNDER MY RULE."

STAND YOUR GROUND, LIKE WARRIORS!
STAND AND REGROUP!
WHAT DO WE DO?
WHAT CAN WE DO?
PULL YOUR FORCES BACK.
REGROUP IF YOU CAN.
I'LL HAVE A GO AT HIM.

Elsewhere...

SOMEONE DID HER SHARE.
DARAH!
YOU MADE IT.
GOOD.
MORE OF THEM KEPT SHOWING UP, AFTER THE FIRST WAVE.
SAVAGES.

I SCREWED UP, HUH?
STUPID OF ME.
I LET MYSELF GROW SO DEPENDENT ON FOREST GHOST'S BETTER SENSES, I DIDN'T PAY ENOUGH ATTENTION TO MY OWN.
LET THESE ANIMALS SNEAK RIGHT UP ON ME.
CHILD'S MISTAKE.
NEVER WOULD'VE HAPPENED IF I HADN'T LET MYSELF GET FAT AND LAZY LIVING IN A PALACE.
REST.
I'LL MAKE THIS HEALING PASTE AND FIX YOU RIGHT UP.
NO.
TOO LATE.
TOO MUCH POISON IN THEIR TOO MANY GODS-CURSED ARROWS.

I'M DONE.
NONSENSE.
IF YOU JUST TALK ME THROUGH THE RECIPE OF MAKING THE MEDICINE...
PROMISE ME YOU WON'T BURY ME, WHERE WORMS AND MAGGOTS WILL GET ME.
AND DON'T BURN ME LIKE MY HUSBAND'S PEOPLE DO.
PLACE ME BESIDE FOREST GHOST, HIGH IN A TREE, ACCORDING TO MY PEOPLE'S CUSTOMS, SO THE SKY PANTHER WILL BE ABLE TO FIND US, OKAY?
WAIT. WE CAN STILL...
AND DO ME ONE OTHER FAVOR.
LOOK AFTER TEEGRA FOR ME.
SURE, OKAY, ONLY...

WHAT'S A TEEGRA?

LEAGUES DISTANT...
IF YOU'VE LAST WORDS, STRANGER, BEST SPEAK THEM NOW.
LAST WORDS ARE FOR THE DEAD AND DYING.
SO YOU SPEAK THEM!
OW.

CURIOUS.

A MOMENT AGO I WOULD'VE SWORN THERE WAS NO BLADE ON THIS WORLD THAT COULD HAVE DONE THIS TO ME.

OW!

THAT WAS UNDIGNIFIED, STRANGER.

I CURSE YOU WITH THREE AND FORTY INFERNAL CURSES.

THINK YOU'VE WON?

YOU HAVEN'T.

THE MALEVOLENT POWERS THAT DRIVE MY BONES AND SINEWS DECREE NO ONE GETS TO PREVAIL AGAINST ME.

NO SHAME IN LOSING TO ME.

YOU DIDN'T FIGHT WELL, BUT AT LEAST YOU STOOD YOUR GROUND AND FOUGHT.

THAT'S SOMETHING TO TELL THE OTHER SHADES DOWN BELOW.
NEXT: THIS WAR CANNOT BE WON, AND MAYBE NOT EVEN SURVIVED.

NEXT ISSUE

The war isn't going well for the kingdom of Firekeep and their allied forces of the south. One after another, cities are falling to the hordes of subhuman thralls unleashed by the Ice Realms. Led by the resurrected prince who now calls himself Kadav'r and wields the dark powers of the pits, no mortal army is able to stand against them. It isn't all gloom and doom, though - Larn finally makes it back to his home village, where he discovers that he's being celebrated as a great hero, and that's a good thing... right?

HIGHLIGHTED TITLES

VAMPIRELLA #5

VAMPIRELLA ARMAGEDDON #3

VAMPIRELLA HALLOWEEN HORROR

SONJA REBORN #2

THE BLUE FALCON & DYNOMUTT #1

SPACE GHOST #2

THUNDERCATS #18

THE HERCULOIDS #8

SILVERHAWKS #8

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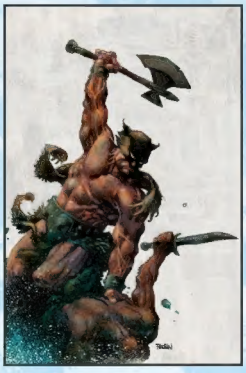

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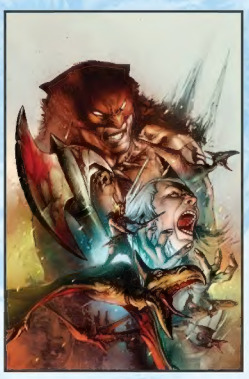

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